

I CLAIM:

1. A personal floatation device including a buoyant foam member fitting over a wearer's shoulders and beneath the wearer's arms to fit over the majority of the front and rear of the wearer's upper torso, the buoyant foam member directly supporting the wearer's upper torso to maintain the wearer's head above water, the buoyant form member comprising a one-piece, initially flat, member folded to fit over the wearer's shoulders and around the wearer's sides beneath the wearer's arms and constrained in a folded configuration to fit the wearer's upper torso.
2. The personal floatation device of claim 1 wherein the buoyant foam member is constrained by an outer garment formed by inner and outer fabric layers surrounding the buoyant foam member.
3. The personal floatation device of claim 2 wherein the inner and outer fabric layers are formed of material having a greater elasticity than natural textile fibers.
4. The personal floatation device of claim 3 wherein the buoyant foam member is free to shift between the inner and outer fabric layers.
5. The personal floatation device of claim 2 wherein the outer garment completely surrounds the upper torso of its wearer and is donned by insertion of the wearer's head, neck and arms through openings in the outer garment and gaps in the foam member.
6. The personal floatation device of claim 1 wherein the buoyant foam member has a solid trunk section, which fits over a wearer's front torso with protrusions extending around the wearer's torso, the ends of these protrusions being spaced apart on a wearer's back torso.
7. The personal floatation device of claim 1 wherein side openings for a wearer's arms are formed between edges of protrusions on the buoyant foam member when in a folded configuration.
8. The personal floatation device of claim 1 wherein the buoyant foam member is cut from a larger flat foam sheet so that multiple buoyant foam members for use in personal floatation devices can be cut from standard foam sheets.
9. A personal flotation device for enhancing the safety of one wearing the personal flotation device in water, the device comprising:

a one-piece vest, cut from a flat, flexible buoyant material, the one-piece vest, when in a flat configuration having a central trunk section with a generally curved opening above the trunk section and spaced from a top edge thereof with a slot extending from the generally curved opening to the top edge thereof to form opposed upper segments on opposite sides of the slot and the curved opening, the one-piece vest, when in the flat configuration, also including wings extending from opposite side edges of a trunk section adjacent the lower edge thereof,

the one-piece vest being folded about a generally horizontal axis to form the personal flotation device so that the upper segments extend behind and are spaced from the trunk section so that the generally curved opening will surround the neck of a wearer of the personal flotation device, and with the wings being folded about generally vertical axes to also extend behind and spaced from the trunk section with the wings and the upper segments forming arm passages through which the arms of the wearer can extend, the one piece vest being restrained in the folded configuration when worn so that the one-piece vest extends over the wearer's shoulders and under the wearer's armpits to support the wearer's torso.

10. The personal floatation device of claim 9 wherein the one-piece vest is disposed between inner and outer layers.

11. The personal floatation device of claim 10 wherein the inner and outer layers comprise fabric layers joined around the generally curved opening forming a neck opening and around openings along opposite sides to form arm openings.

12. The personal floatation device of claim 10 wherein the wings are free to laterally shift between the inner and outer layers so that the personal floatation device can fit wearers of different sizes.

13. The personal floatation device of claim 9 wherein the one-piece vest comprises a die cut member.

14. A buoyant shirt comprising a personal floatation device for a wearer:

inner and outer layers forming a shirt configuration with an enclosure between the inner and outer layers with an upper opening for a wearer's neck extending through both inner and outer layers, and with two side openings through which the wearer's arms can

extend being formed through the inner and outer layers on opposite sides of the upper opening; and

a buoyant material being confined within the enclosure between the inner and outer layers, the buoyant material extending between the upper openings and each side opening between a front portion of the enclosure to a rear portion of the shirt, and extending beneath both side openings between the front portion of the enclosure and the rear portion of the enclosure so that buoyant material would be located on both the front and rear of a wearer's torso, the buoyant material having a sufficient volume to hold the wearer's head above water.

10 15. The buoyant shirt of claim 14 having a tee shirt configuration such that the wearer's head and arms are inserted respectively through the upper openings and side openings when the buoyant shirt is donned.

16. The buoyant shirt of claim 15 wherein the inner and outer layers are joined together around the upper opening and the side openings.

15 17. The buoyant shirt of claim 16 wherein the inner and outer layers are stitched together around the upper opening and the side openings.

18. The buoyant shirt of claim 15 wherein the inner and outer layers are formed of an expandable material having a elasticity greater than natural textile fibers.

19. The buoyant shirt of claim 14 wherein the buoyant material comprises a one-piece member having sufficient flexibility to be draped over a wearer's shoulders and around a wearer's sides beneath a wearer's armpits.

20. The buoyant shirt of claim 19 wherein the buoyant material comprises a front bib section with protrusions extending from a top of the bib section on both sides of the upper opening and from sides of the bib section beneath both side openings so that the protrusions will extend from a wearer's front torso to a wearer's rear torso.